Tempe

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Technology, Economic & Community Development Committee held on Tuesday, December 4, 2009, at 10:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:
Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian, Chair
Councilmember Corey Woods

City Staff Present:

Jan Hort, City Clerk	Chris Messer, Comm Dev
Dave Heck, IT	Sheri Wakefield-Saenz, Econ Dev
Alex W. Smith, IT	Micah Miranda, Comm Dev Spec
Chris Salomone, Comm Dev	

Guests Present:
Laura Skutt, Down Tempe Community
Katherine Mayorga, Tempe Chamber of Commerce (via telephone)
Birgitte Santaella, ASU Economic Development

Councilmember Shekerjian called the meeting to order at 10:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 - Introductions
Everyone introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from October 9, 2009
Motion by Councilmember Woods to approve the minutes for October 9, 2009. Second by Councilmember Shekerjian. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances
None.

Agenda Item 4 – Updated Work Plan - Priorities
Chris Messer presented the committee members with color coded work plans that included how the topics were prioritized, what topics were completed or are on-going (red), and what has been added as new to the work plan (green).

Agenda Item 5 – Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC)/Renewable Industries Update
Alex Smith presented the October 2009 GPEC business lead data. In October, 12 leads were received from GPEC. The solar sector is active. Two or three projects shown are from the previous year, but are still active.

Councilmember Shekerjian mentioned that Councilmember Woods is utilizing social media to promote the Sealife Aquarium attraction in Tempe. Chris Salomone stated that Sealife owns sanctuaries worldwide where they preserve delicate aquatic species and have been classified as a leader in environmental sustainability. There will be a seahorse exhibit included at the Tempe location. Committee members agreed to co-author an editorial on Facebook's "My Turn" to promote the Merlin aquarium projects and the efforts by Sealife to preserve sea life species. Hopefully, this will quell the Goldwater Institute insinuation that the $150,000 incentive is an inappropriate use of public funds.

Staff was directed to determine the costs to the City. Currently, the cost appears to be approximately $30,000 for the major permits pulled for the initial phase. This appears to be well below the estimated $150,000. It is anticipated that that the City will gain so much more for allowing children to attend at a reduced rate, creating a learning environment. The reality of this project is that it will provide this region with an interactive learning aquatic environment that will generate revenue for the community; the payback will outweigh the initial investment for this project.

Agenda Item 6 – Downtown Garden Update
Chris Messer stated that the necessary agreements have been executed in order to utilize a downtown parcel of land for the purposes of planting a community garden. The Downtown Tempe Community (DTC) has taken the lead on this project. The Phoenix Permaculture Guild is no longer a part of the partnership. It is anticipated that DTC will have a budget by Wednesday as well as a plan as to Rio Salado College participation intentions.

This location is being considered for dinners and fund raisers/special events. Chef Curry would be the lead chef for events at this location. This would also be an ideal project to document for the purposes of holding lecture series. Classes could also be held at this site for school credit. Bringing the Market on Mill event closer to the garden location is also being considered, so that these activities compliment each other.

A suggestion to place a camera on site to document the community garden growth and make it accessible via the website was made by Mr. Heck, ITD. Staff was asked to research whether or not a time lapse could be used in the web documentation. There will be signage and possibly a wall mural promoting this project. Staff will also be meeting to ensure that this project meets City code specifications. Councilmember Shekerjian closed by suggesting that if this project is successful, hopefully other locations in Tempe will be appropriate for this type of use.

Agenda Item 7 – Business Data Base
Alex Smith stated that staff has the technical capability to track business activity geographically, by sector, number of employees and whatever other activity management deems worthy of tracking. This would be done by the use of an Enterprise GIS software system which uses analysis to track various data sources. The detailed information can be used as a market tool to pro-actively assist business. Currently Tempe has a $50 annual Transaction Privilege Sales Tax license fee. That does not apply to service, manufacturing or other activities not defined as being a taxable. This data could be used to promote business activity in Tempe and provide a means of notification to business owners for economic development purposes.

Staff is considering modifying existing databases in order to improve the quality of data collected and enhance the Business Outreach Program. This data could be used to send new businesses welcome packets on a monthly basis, which could be done electronically. Small businesses could benefit from this proactive approach and for Tempe to maintain its competitive advantage. No revenue is expected to be raised by this program. However, it is intended to maximize existing resources for business owners that choose to operate within Tempe. An ordinance change would be required to make the information mandatory through licensing.

Discussions were held as to whether the program could be made accessible to the public to perform their own analysis. It was noted by Ms. Wakefield that the program itself was proprietary to the City and not accessible to the public as an interactive tool. But the data gathered could be made accessible.

Katherine Mayorga offered the support of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce and volunteered to promote this program in the Chamber's monthly newsletter. Ms. Mayorga also suggested that a City staff representative attend an upcoming Chamber meeting to educate members on the interrelationship between the City and Chamber and how this program may be utilized as a valuable resource to promote Tempe businesses and/or services.

Sheri Wakefield stated that another possible extension of capturing useful data for this program would be for home based businesses, which staff currently does not track if it is not a taxable activity. There are jurisdictions that require 'business licenses' for these types of activities. Councilmember Shekerjian stated that the economy has already stressed the community enough and that this would not be the right time to require an additional 'business' license.

Shelley Hearn commented that this program could be used as a public information tool to assist consumers on what types of businesses and services are available in Tempe. Councilmember Shekerjian mentioned that a voluntary business registration program is a positive step. Possibly, additional fields could be added to the Transaction Privilege Tax form to offer the service to businesses.   Staff was asked to present this program at an upcoming Issue Review Session.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Agenda Items
DTC interactive web database demonstration
Economic Development strategic plan - February

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Prepared by: Kay Savard
Reviewed by: Chris Messer

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Jan Hort
City Clerk